

## **Summary Minutes**

### **Alexandria Waterfront Committee Meeting March 17, 2009**

**Members:** Jay Atkinson  
Christine Bernstein  
Henry Brooks  
Mike Geissinger  
Linda Hafer  
Nathan Macek  
Peter Pennington  
Susan Pettey  
John Renner  
Robert Taylor

**City Staff:** Andrea Barlow, Planning & Zoning (P&Z)  
Roger Blakeley, Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities (RPCA)  
Jim Hixon, RPCA  
Lt. Dianne Gittens, Police Department

**Guests:** Brian V. Buzzell  
Susan Cohen  
Frank Fannon  
Harry Harrington  
Sean McCabe, National Park Service  
Van Van Fleet

#### **Welcome and introductions**

Committee members and guests introduced themselves.

#### **Approval of minutes from the February meeting**

It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes of the February meeting.

#### **Update on RPCA Issues**

Blakely stated that RPCA has received a docking request from the Peacemaker, a 150-foot sparred length, 3-masted, wooden tall ship that hosted 70,000 while docked in Savannah, Georgia this past holiday season. The tall ship has requested to dock at the Marina from May 7 through May 18, a period of 12 days. The ship is a U.S. Coast Guard licensed attraction vessel and would be open daily for dockside tours to the public at no charge. It would be docked at the Key Pier. This request must go to the City Council for approval, but would be a waterfront attraction of interest to the Committee. Pennington suggested that the attraction be promoted to guests of National Harbor. Bernstein suggested that the City monitor trash receptacles in Founders Park while the ship is docked in Alexandria.

Blakely pointed to a diagram of the City's budget schedule. He said there have already been a number of sessions, including a follow-up meeting on the RPCA CIP and operating budgets and their impacts the previous evening. He said that Council was told that due to the budget situation, there would be a delay to some of the investments that people expected. He noted that RPCA would be down by 10 full-time staffers and would lose seasonal staff to maintain parks. It would take more time to maintain parks and recreation facilities since it must be done with the department's existing staff. He said that due to the cuts the department would be slower in responding to inquiries.

In response to a question from Bernstein, he said that the department would seek to apply volunteer labor, but that required sufficient staff time to adequately manage such efforts.

Blakeley said that the budget included a reduction in horticultural spending of \$200,000. He said that RPCA would be focusing horticulture spending on tourist areas, the Washington Street median, and City portals. There would not be a lot of flowers planted outside those areas. He said that RPCA would be planting more perennials instead of annuals.

He said that the City would like to do everything suggested in the Waterfront Committee's letter regarding the City Manager's proposed budget, but the resources aren't there. He said that Council realizes the City is in a predicament and would like to avoid cutbacks.

Blakeley said that procurement of the Marina gates project had been submitted for approval but was pulled by the City Finance Department. Blakeley said that he would pursue this decision directly with Finance and would seek to move forward with procuring the gates.

A member of the public stated that the City should send a letter to the civic associations requesting assistance. He said that civic associations want the City to look nice and may be willing to plant flowers or mow the lawn of adjacent City-owned properties, with City permission. Bernstein said that the letter must be specific about the needs with which civic associations could assist.

Another member of the public stated that the City would not look nice because of the proposed budget cuts, and suggested cutting the planning budget, for example, so the City could take care of its current needs.

Blakeley stated that RPCA had recently applied labor from the Sheriff's Office. Hixon stated that he has researched applying volunteer assistance for RPCA projects. He said that there are more issues than meet the eye with applying volunteer labor, to ensure that the job is done right. He stated that on Friday, May 1 from 8:00 to 11:00 a.m. there would be a volunteer effort to clean up litter

at Jones Point Park. Pettey urged Waterfront Committee members to volunteer for this project.

In response to a question from Macek regarding the status of the Windmill Hill Park bulkheads, Blakeley stated that an RPCA crew cut off the exposed rebar to address the most significant and dangerous damage to the bulkheads. This mitigated the need to install danger signs.

A member of the public stated that the federal economic stimulus package includes a \$5.5 million earmark for Windmill Hill Park improvements. Blakeley stated that the funds have not yet been appropriated to City and it's not clear where the money is. He said he would keep the Committee updated on the flow of federal money to the project.

### **Update on Waterfront Planning Process**

Barlow stated that due to conflicts with other City events, the first Waterfront Planning meetings would not be until April 23, April 30, and June 27.

The first meeting, on Saturday, April 23, would provide an opportunity for community members to express views about what the waterfront plan means to them. Some groups have established principles on the waterfront, and would be invited to present those principles to the public. Barlow encouraged the Waterfront Committee to develop and present its own principles at this meeting.

The Saturday, April 30 meeting would include presentations from experts on best practices that have worked for waterfronts elsewhere. These back-to-back April meetings would enable sharing of community ideas and expert views.

Barlow said that the process would include a walking tour of the waterfront in May, followed by time for staff and consultants to work with the findings from the two April meetings. She said that P&Z planned to hold a work session with the Waterfront Committee to solicit its feedback on moving initial plans forward.

The Saturday, June 27 meeting would report on existing Waterfront conditions, including shoreline, historic resources, parks, connectivity, market conditions, etc. The plan is for the existing conditions report to be presented in the morning, followed by a community visioning session in the afternoon. The intention is to complete all of these tasks before summer break, so that consultants can formulate options during July and August.

In September, P&Z would return to the public with three or more options for consideration. The goal is to refine the options and complete the process by May next year. After plan is completed, it will be publicly circulated for two rounds of public consultation in which comments will be received and reconciled in the draft and, ultimately, the final plan. The goal is to narrow down areas of disagreement to reach consensus.

In response to a question from Macek, Barlow said that sets of options may include sub-options that could be mixed and matched as public comment warrants.

A task force comprised of Atkinson, Hafer, Macek, Pennington, and Pettey volunteered to prepare a draft set of waterfront plan principles for the Committee to consider in advance of its April meeting.

### **Announcements**

Pennington stated that the Environmental Policy Committee would have an Eco City Cafe meeting on Thursday, March 19 to discuss long term goals for the Environmental Action Plan at 6:00 p.m. at the Lee Center.

Pennington announced that the City's Earth Day celebration would be Saturday, April 25, 2008 at Ben Brenman Park. He said there would be a focus on alternative transport to and from the event, including bus rides to and from King Street Metro Station. He said residents would be able to buy trees from the City at the event.

Macek announced that a King Street Retail Forum would be held Thursday, March 19, 2008. Barlow added that consultant Bob Gibbs would present the initial findings of his study on King Street Retail opportunities.

### **Adjournment**

The Committee adjourned at 8:17 a.m.